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RETIREMENT:

A N

E P I S T L E.

By Mr. P O T T E R. (R) Trebendary
K of Norwich.

Inter Sylvas Academi quærere verum.

H O R.



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RE FIRMEN T:

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BY MR. POTTER

H O R

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RETIREMENT:

A N

E P I S T L E.

WHEN on the Stage *Bayes* bids th'Eclipse advance,
 Earth, Sun, and Moon confounding in the Dance;
 If Critics wisely act, who damn the Fool
 Outraging Nature, and transgressing Rule;
 How in the World's mad Dance shall we forbear
 The serious Censure, or contemptuous Sneer?
 Where ev'ry Age, and ev'ry State is found
 Treading a like, absurd, unnatural Round:

B

A

A Round that rules not only Forms of State,
 But governs all th' Affairs of all the Great.
 Look o'er the military Lifts, you'll find
 The supple Coward, whose ignoble Mind
 With slavish Suff'rance joins the Fav'rite's Side,
 Watching his Smiles, and bending to his Pride,
 Rise o'er the brave Man's Head, and snatch the Place
 His scorn'd, but modest, Worth was form'd to grace.
 Nay, when we groan distemper'd with our Pain,
 And the fierce Fever boils in ev'ry Vein,
 Proud to the very Confines of the Grave,
 By the long Wig we judge the Skill to save.
 Or what avails in *Warburton* to find
 The Power of Genius, Soul of Science join'd?
 The sacred Mitre dignifies *his* Brows,
 Who lowest to th'unletter'd Courtier bows.

TOO

TOO just to flatter, and too brave to lie,
 From such a World the Sons of Virtue fly :
 Yet, blest with Innocence, how few can find
 What to supply the mighty Void of Mind !
 Becalm'd, and wanting Oars, they ask the Gale
 Of others Breath to swell the flagging Sail,
 Whilst the pale Villain, hearing Conscience loud,
 Flies the still Scene, and shelters in a Croud.

O teach us, for you know, to be alone,
 And all the Pleasures of Reflection own ;
 Let us that greatest Blessing learn of you,
 To view our selves, nor tremble at the View ;
 Teach us to live by your unerring Rule,
 In Solitude nor indolent, nor dull.

And B 2

And let *me* blefs you, for your friendly Care
 Remov'd me from the World, and plac'd me here;
 And taught me, in the boiling Rage of Youth,
 To hear the Voice of Reason and of Truth;
 Willing your Friend that Happinefs thou'd find,
 Which gilds your Shades, and calms your spotless Mind.

FROM the Reflections these calm Scenes allow,
 Much of myself, and of the World I know;
 I know that Liberty, Man's greatest Boast,
 Is in the Chace of wild Ambition loft;
 Enslav'd to all the Vanities of State,
 The Follies, and the Passions of the Great:
 Nor are the Great more free; their constant Train
 Drives the fair Goddess to the humble Plain;
 Their Actions closely watch'd, their Words mark'd down,
 And e'en their very Thoughts no more their own;

Pursu'd

Pursu'd by Flatterers, Parasites, and Knaves,
 What are they but the veriest Slaves to Slaves ?
 And what concludes this Pageantry of Life ?---
 The Axe of Justice, or the murd'ring Knife.---
 Bribing and brib'd to grasp the dazzling Prize,
 And lab'ring in their Country's Fall to rise ;
Tarpeia's just Return their Treachery yields,
 No golden Bracelet, but the brazen Shields.

THERE are who Free midst all their Greatness live,
 If the Name, Free, to That we rightly give,
 Which follows (slavish Term!) Passion's strong Gust,
 The Heat of Appetite ; and Rage of Lust ;
 If e'er the flitting Phantom meet their Arms,
 How faint her Air, how languid are her Charms !
 Yet shall she hold them to her wanton Lore,
 With the fond Dalliance of a painted Whore :

Mean

Mean while pale Virtue, groaning on the Ground,
 With all her ruin'd Honours scatter'd round,
 Insulted lies, and with indignant Shame
 Blushes to see the Pageant's guilty Fame.

O Liberty! O Virtue! If your Voice,
 Affuasive yet, can fix the doubtful Choice;
 Lead us, O lead us to sequestred Shades,
 Where Reason rules, and not one Lust invades;
 Far from the Life of Vanity or Care,
 From Grandeur, Folly, Passion, Pride, and Fear.
 Th' unbroken Calm of rural Scenes you love,
 The Nymphs that haunt the Fountain and the Grove:
 Oft when the Wise, by Contemplation led,
 The darksome Grove, or Moon-light Meadow tread,
 You join the Walk, and breath into the Breast
 The sweet Complacency of a Mind at Rest;

Whence

Whence purer Reason, heighten'd Wisdom flow,
 An *Hoedly's* Calmness, or a Seraph's Glow.
 There nor dependant, and by none confin'd,
 We act the sober Dictates of the Mind ;
 There dare we give the gen'rous Smile to flow,
 Not barely fashion'd from another's Brow ;
 Or sit, or walk, uncumber'd with the Train
 That swells the little Great, and meanly vain ;
 Our Guard white Innocence and Wisdom brings,
 More solemn than the tedious Pomp of Kings.
 This, this is Virtue ! O'er the peaceful Plains
 In all her Glory bright the Goddess reigns ;
 Behold her winning and majestic Air !
 Before---the Laws her white-rob'd Virgins bear ;
 Commerce and Plenty, Industry and Wealth,
 Honour's fair Train, and ever-blooming Health

Attend

Attend her Side ; Peace sheds her Smiles around ;
 Each Muse walks honour'd, and each Science crown'd :
 Whilst pleas'd she views her Chariot-Wheels beneath
 Ambition, Pride, Lust, Fortune, Fear, and Death.

FORGIVE a Verse the Love of Virtue warms,
 Nor think these only visionary Charms ;
 You'll find them, list'ning to the moral Strain,
 More than a flatt'ring Fiction of the Brain :
 Come then, with me, the Heat of Rapture quit,
 Hear sober Reas'ning in Exchange for Wit ;
 Preach on the World, but first the Text divide,
 Of Business first, of Pleasure next decide.

HOW can the Man, whose every Thought is Pelf,
 Search his own Mind, and look into himself ?

Unheard

Unheard without all grave Reflections wait,
 Like humble Suitors at the Great Man's Gate ;
 Intent on each low Artifice to thrive,
 Strangers to Virtue, and themselves they live :
 An honest Man, if honest such may be,
 Breathes many a Sigh, and wishes to be free ;
 But, like the *Roman* Parricide, is found,
 With Serpents, Dogs, and Apes shut up and bound.

HOW are the filken Sons of Pleasure lost,
 In all her wild Rotations madly tost ?
 The flow'ry Round unthinkingly they tread,
 Where Vanities to Vanities succeed ;
 Amusements ever new their Reason blind,
 Hope plays before, but Mockery steals behind.

C

LEAD

LEAD them from these Pursuits, at some grave Hour,
 To the calm Garden, or sequestred Bower ;
 Collected there each scatter'd Beam of Thought,
 They learn to think, and reason as they ought ;
 Fame drops the Wreath ; the Pageantry of Pow'r,
 And Wealth's own Magic cheats the Sense no more.
 No more the Wanton ask the painted Toy,
 True solid Pleasures realize their Joy ;
 They find that Happiness in Reason lies,
 Reason, that makes us, and that keeps us wise.

Nor end we here ; new Joys enrich the Scene,
 In the calm Sunshine of a Soul serene ;
 On Life's wide Sea unsteadily we sail,
 Sport of the dashing Tide, or driving Gale ;

Or

Or Hope misleads the flatter'd Sense, or Fear
 Embitters each tumultuous Hour with Care ;
 Each Conversation pains ; on ev'ry Side
 Fancied or real Insults hurt our Pride ;
 We pine with Envy at the prosp'rous State,
 But tofs the Head, and mock th' Unfortunate ;
 In Passion's giddy Whirl we vainly strive,
 Converse in Storms, and in a Tempest live :
 But, from the World retir'd, we find that Rest
 Which calms the troubled Ocean of the Breast ;
 The distant Images, e'erwhile so gay,
 Languid and faint upon the Fancy play ;
 And with them ev'ry Passion dies away.

STILL let me raise the Verse, and point the Road
 That leads thro' Nature up to Nature's God ;

The heighten'd Theme requires a bolder Wing,

“ The God, the God, the vocal Vallies ring.”

On ev'ry Mountain we confess his Pow'r,

In ev'ry Bush the *still small Voice* adore :

When 'mongst yon' venerable Oaks I rove,

I own the Deity that fills the Grove :

If the sage Tree no Voice prophetic gives,

If in its Bark no fabled *Druid* lives,

HE gave each tow'ring Trunk to rise, HE spread

The waving Foliage of each reverend Head ;

Known in each Leaf unfolding to the Spring,

Seen in each Insect of the meanest Wing,

Found in each Herb, each Flow'r that decks the Field,

In ev'ry Walk convers'd with and beheld ;

Blest Intercourse ! when deigns with Man to join

Th' all-gracious Prefence of the Pow'r Divine ;

When,

When, great Example of primæval Grace,
 Man communes with his God as Face to Face.
 Hence, hence, ye Vain! with all your Pomp remove;
 For Kings and Courts quit all the Wise approve;
 For Kings and Courts the Godhead and the Grove!

THERE are, who feel these Truths, the Joy serene,
 The humble Blessings of the rural Scene;
 But false Desires their erring Judgments cheat,
 And ruin all their Bliss to make them Great:
 Fools! not to know that Solitude and Pride,
 Things inconsistent, will not be ally'd;
 That Nature, craving no luxurious Feast,
 Asks but a little, and rejects the rest:
 Not that this Lust of Pomp wou'd be so ill,
 Cou'd we, like *Joshua*, bid the Sun stand still;

Or

Or to our Wishes fet a certain Bound,
 Stop when we reach it, nor aspire beyond ;
 But here no more than foolish Children wile,
 Who covet ev'ry Star that decks the Skies ;
 The Skies appear to their unjudging Sight,
 As resting on yon' Hill's aspiring Height ;
 The little Wantons pant and glow with Joy,
 Eager to gather up each sparkling Toy ;
 Their Breasts in vain a nearer Hope inspires,
 The moving Sky, as they advance, retires ;
 Till, having gain'd the Summit, they deplore
 The flying Stars as distant as before :
 Than these no wiser We our Wishes bound,
 The Bound we find, Content is never found ;
 Still we toil on, in warning Nature's Spite,
 Find no Horizon to our Appetite ;

Run

Run the same Round with never-resting Haste,
 Till Death th' enchanted Circle bursts at last.
 Wou'dst thou be blest? Thy false Desires resign;
 Now, now retire; the Future is not thine;
 Dare to be wise; for He, that here delays,
 * The Clown upon the River's Margin stays,
 Expecting till the passing Stream be dry'd,
 Still glides the passing Stream, and will for ever glide.

BUT how retire? Shall we, like *Timon*, flie
 From all Mankind, and in a Desert die?
 In fretful Pique, or Indolence forego
 Life's various Duty, and its Comforts too?
 Each kindly Seed of social Joy suppress,
 No Friend to comfort, and no Child to bless?

A

* *Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis: et ille
 Labitur & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

A Brother's Bliss nor feel, nor Wants relieve,
 And Heav'n's own Gifts unthankfully receive?
 Man's common Nature, common Good resign'd,
 The wretched *Expletives of Humankind*?

OR say, too liberal for Ascetic Hate,
 Shall we *Statilius*' Bounties imitate?
 Think to retire but to forsake the Town,
 And carry all its Noise and Nonsense down?
 Unfelt the Rapture of the silent Hour,
 No Shade sequestred sought, no thoughtful Bower;
 Drive sage Reflexion from her favour'd Groves,
 Haunt of mad *Bacchanals*, and lawless Loves;
 With Riot's Voice bid ev'ry Echo ring,
 And fright the Muses from their Wood and Spring?

OH!

OH! 'twixt the mad Extreme on either Side,
 Let Wisdom lead us, or let *C---d* guide!
 Behold that Man, how glorious in Retreat;
 Good without Noise, without a Title Great;
 See him with all the social Virtues blest,
 Those Emanations of the gen'rous Breast!
 From Him the Wretch unbought Advice receives,
 And drooping Anguish lifts the Head and lives;
 Deep his Researches, open is his Mind,
 And much he knows, and knows for all Mankind;
 Too good for Business, and too wise for Pow'r,
 He sought the Shades of *Spargrove's* blissful Bow'r;
 There his lov'd Joys of learned Ease He found,
 And all the joyful Country smiles around.

DYE

YE venerable Groves, whose op'ning Glades
 Invite the museful Wand'rer to your Shades!
 Ye Birds, whose honied Notes enthrall the Ear,
 Wake the bright Morn, the darksome Ev'ning chear!
 Ye Fountains, murm'ring Music as you flow!
 Ye Flow'rs, that on their purple Margins glow!
 Ye Winds, that o'er those Flow'rs soft-breathing play,
 Calm the hot Sky, and mitigate the Day!
 Take me, O take me to your lov'd Retreats;
 All, all conspire to bless me with your Sweets!
 Here in your soft Enclosure let me prove
 The Shade and Silence of the Life I love;
 Not idle here; for as I rove along
 I form the Verse, and meditate the Song;
 Or mend my Mind by what the Wise have taught,
 Studious to be the very Thing I ought:

Here

Here will I taste the Blessings of Content,
No Hope shall flatter, and no Fear torment;
Unlike the Sea, the Sport of ev'ry Wind,
And rich with Wrecks, the Ruin of Mankind,
My Life an honest, humble Praise shall claim,
As the small Stream, scarce honour'd with a Name,
Whose glad'ning Waters thro' my Garden play,
Give a few Flow'rs to smile, then glide away.

F I N I S.

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